

An Analysis of Factors Responsible for High Out of School Children in Nigeria and Way Forward

Niyi Jacob Ogunode

University of Abuja, Nigeria
Ogunodejacob@gmail.com

Chinwuba Mary Adanna

University of Abuja
mary.ndukuba@gmail.com

Abstract: One of the major problem facing Nigeria as Country is how to address the problem of out of school children. Every year the population of out of school children keeps increasing. It has been observed that Nigeria has the highest out of school children in the World. This paper examined the factors responsible for out of school children in Nigeria. Among other things, the paper discussed are; concept of out of school children, factors responsible for out of school children in Nigeria and the paper suggested the way forward.

Keywords: Basic Education, Children, Funding, Insecurity, Out of school.

Introduction

The Nigerian government is politically and legally committed to free, compulsory, and universal basic education under the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act of 2004, which also earmarks fiscal resources to the UBE program – yet, basic education remains the weakest link in the education chain. The Nigerian education system can be described as a “1-6-3-3-4” system: one year of pre-primary school, six years of primary followed by three years of junior secondary education, which together comprise basic education; the next three years are senior secondary education, followed by four years of tertiary education. A pre-primary year has been introduced recently, and is considered part of basic education.

The Nigerian basic education is faced with many problems and one of the problem is the inability to provide quality and accessible basic education for her children of school age. Report from UNICEF (2022) observed that about 18.5 million children, the majority of whom are girls, do not have access to education in Nigeria, a figure up sharply compared with 2021, the U.N children's fund says about estimated 10.5 million children were out of school in Africa's most populous country. "Currently in Nigeria, there are 18.5 million out-of-school children, 60% of whom are girls," (Voannews 2022; UNICEF 2022).

For instance, in West Africa, Nigeria accounts for 45 per cent of out-of-school children. Over the years, the number of out-of-school children in Nigeria has increased from 10.5 to 13.2 million and 69 per cent of these numbers are from the north. Majority of the children undergoing traditional Arabic School under the almajiri system in the hands of local teachers are left unkempt, as their parents dumped them in Kano from other parts of the north, with little or no care. Expectedly, these innocent kids roam the streets begging to survive. In the southern part of Nigeria is the problem of out of boy children, who drop out in the South East and South South zones, and the so-called “area boys” (loosely organized gangs of mostly male street children and teenagers) in the South West.

Report by Premiumtime (2021) indicated that with 33 per cent, the North-east had the highest

proportion of its school-age children out-of-school. This was followed by North-central with 26 per cent; North-west with 25 per cent; South-south, 24 per cent; South-west with 22; and South-east with 19 per cent. This problem of out of school children is causing a social problem and educational crisis in the basic education in Nigeria. These out of school children in Nigeria are caused by many factors. This paper aimed to discuss the factors responsible for the out of school children in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored on Social Demand Approach (SDA). Ibia, (2014); Campbell, (2002); Fabunmi, (2007) and Olaniyonu, Adekoya & Gbenu, (2008) observed that the Social Demand Approach (SDA) is a method in educational planning which sees education as public social service; a necessity and inalienable right of all citizens who desire it. It is a consumption view of education suitable when education is considered as an obligation and not as a privilege (Ibia, 2014). Ibia, (2014) submitted that the Dutch adopted the SDA in planning her educational system when government stated that: If a sufficiently qualified citizen stands at the door of any type of school, he must be admitted, and it is the responsibility of the appropriate government authorizes to anticipate his request so that school capacity will be adequate to accommodate him. Also, Ibia, (2014); Longe (2003) and Olaniyonu, et al (2008), stated that the adoption of the SDA in any successful educational programme requires that accurate demographic information be made available. Such information must include the total number of pupils to be provided with education, the number of teachers to be trained and re-retrained, classroom facilities and laboratory equipments needed. As a measure of ensuring an accurate projection of pupil population, the SDA requires the use of population growth rate formula and time series analysis to study past population trends and extrapolate this to the future (Ibia, 2014; Olatunde-Aiyedun, 2021a). This becomes necessary so that estimated population of pupils can be determined at present and facilities made available. Ibia, (2014); Gbadamosi (2005) and Olatunde-Aiyedun (2021b), opined that adoption of SDA has a lot of advantages which is in line with the goal of UBE namely; increasing the level of literacy, enhancing equality of educational opportunities, reducing the level of social tension because politicians use education as political gimmick to win votes while the masses see it as a means of social ladder; less complex in adoption and that it facilitates the process of income re-distribution.

In relation to this paper, the government need to capture these children into the basic education because it is there to be educated. The education of the children will help to reduce the social problem of begging in the street and increase the social economic of the country in long run.

Concept of Out of School Children

Out of school children are aged school children that are supposed to be in schools but are not in schools due to parental failure and governmental failure to provide accessible quality education for them. Out of school children are young children in the age group of 1 to 12 that are roaming the street without access to a functional educational system (Ojelade, Aiyedun & Aregebesola, 2019). Out of school children are the children that the government and the parents have fails to provide quality basic education for.

Factors Responsible for High Out of School Children in Nigeria

There are many factors responsible for the high number of out of school children in Nigeria. Some of these factors would be considered; ineffective educational planning, poor funding, inadequate educational institutions, poor implementation of policies and programme, political instability, corruption, insecurity, high rate of poverty and high population rate (Olamoyegun, Olatunde-Aiyedun & Ogunode, 2022).

Ineffective Educational Planning

Ineffective educational planning is a major factor responsible for the large out of school children in Nigeria. The educational planning system has failed over years to capture the actual

population growth rate into the educational planning system of the country. One of the features of educational planning is projection and forecasting. Akpan (undated) opined that the educational planners in Nigeria sometimes underestimate the cost of education as a result of poor forecasting of students' enrolment (. For example the cost of UPE scheme in Eastern Nigeria in 1957 was greatly underestimated. This gave rise to poor implementation of the scheme. The number of pupils enrolled in the scheme was greater than the estimated figure. There were no classrooms for pupils to learn and the new schools established were not enough to accommodate the increase in pupils' enrolment. The government needed more funds for administration of the programme. All these happened because of poor prediction by educational planners. The same thing happened in 1976 when the federal government of Nigeria launched the universal free primary education. When the programme started in 1976, eight million pupils enrolled across the country and by 1980, the figure rose to over fifteen million pupils. The programme experienced serious problems and it was clear that the planning was defective. Akpan (undated) observed that sometimes educational planners in the country produce faulty educational plans with ambiguous goals and objectives. Ogunode, Eyiolorunse-Aiyedun and Olatunde-Aiyedun (2021) stated that inadequate funding of planning, inadequate educational planners, lack of data/information, lack of planning materials, political influence, political instability, policies instability, corruption, poor capacity development of educational planners and lack of Political will to support planning of education as the challenges preventing effective planning of education in Nigeria.

Poor Funding

Poor funding of education is another factor responsible for the high number of out of school children in Nigeria. Funding is key in achieving educational objectives. Adequate funding will guarantee provision of adequate human and materials resources to meet up with the demand of the educational needs of the people. The history of educational financing in Nigeria for the past years is not encouraging. For instance Investigation by Punch (2021) showed that Nigeria did not allocate up to 15 percent of its annual budget to education in the last six years, just like those of the previous years. In 2016, the Federal Government allocated N369.6bn which amounted to 6.7 per cent of the national budget of N6.06tn to education, while in 2017, N550.5bn; representing 7.38 percent of the N7.29tn budget was allocated to the sector. In 2018, N605.8bn, out of N9.12tn budget, representing 7.04 per cent was allocated to education; in 2019, it was N 620.5bn, representing 7.05 per cent of the N 8.92tn budget. In 2020, N671.07bn of N10.33tn which amounted to 6.7 per cent was allocated to the sector; while in 2021 the sector got N742.5bn of N13.6tn budget, representing 5.6 per cent. Factors responsible to underfunding of education in Nigeria according Ogunode, Olatunde-Aiyedun and Akin-Ibidiran, (2020); Ogunode and Onyekachi, (2021) include short fall in national revenue, compete from other sector, corruption, insecurity, natural disaster and lack of political will to implement UNESCO recommendation on education and the effects of underfunding education in Nigeria include inadequate infrastructural facilities, inadequate professional teachers, shortage of instructional materials, poor quality of education, poor capacity development, poor supervision and strike actions.

Inadequate Educational Institutions

Inadequate educational institutions especially the basic schools are responsible for the high number of out of school children in Nigeria. The educational institutions for all the forms of education are not adequate to meet up with the population grow rate of the country. For instance, Statista (2019) reported that public primary schools in Nigeria is 61,921, private 55,004 totaling 116,925. These public basic schools are not adequate to meet up with the millions of out of school children in Nigeria.

Poor Implementation of Policies and Programme

Poor implementation of educational policies and programmes designed to reduce the out of school children is another fundamental factor responsible for the high number out of school children in Nigeria. There are many policies and programmes such as Child Act Right with the

broad objectives making education compulsory for all Nigerian child. Report from Ogunode (2021a) observed that some states government have not domestic the acts in their various states affecting the implementation of the law. The National feeding programme is another programme designed to promote child education and increase enrolment in the Basic schools. Ogunode & Abubakar (2021) observed that the National Home Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) is an educational policy with the aims of increasing primary school enrollment. The National Home Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) in public primary schools is designed to reduce the out of school children in Nigeria. The programme started in 2003 and stopped. It was started in 2016 again. The implementation of the programme has faced many challenges. Ajemba, Ahmed, Ogunode and Olatunde-Aiyedun (2021) stated the problems militating against implementation of programmes in Nigerian public schools to include; identified inadequate funding, increase in population, corruption, poor monitoring and evaluation, lack of data to plan, delay in releasing money, inflation and insecurity problem as the challenges preventing the implementation of the programme. Generally, Ogunode and Adah (2020) and Ogunode, Jegede, and Ajape (2021) identified insecurity challenge, inadequate funding, inadequate infrastructural facilities, inadequate professional teachers, institutional corruption, lack of political will, lack of continuity in commitment to policy implementation, political instability, poor policy formulation, poor relationship between policy designers and policy implementers as challenges preventing effective implementation of educational policies in Nigeria.

Political Instability

Political instability is another strong reason for the high number of out of school children in Nigeria. The Nigerian political system is characterized with political changes in government. The democratic system adopted by Nigeria permits four years elected government. Every government that comes to power has a political agenda and programme to implement and achieve for their tenure. Ogunode (2021b) submitted that political instability is another major problem preventing the effective implementation of educational policies in Nigeria. Political instability is one of the features of third world countries like Nigeria. Many educational policies have been put to hold due to changes in government or administration from one political party to another political (Ogunode, 2020). For instance, the government of people democratic party started a programme titled Almajiri schools project with objectives of reducing out of school children in Nigeria. This programme was suspended by the incoming government immediately they assumed office. Guardian (2022) reported that LEADERS of Arewa Consulative Forum (ACF) have criticised the government for abandoning the Almajiri schools. They also faulted the various northern state governors for not building on the legacy of the past government by building more schools that would help in improving the almajiri educational and social status, rather than allow them fall into the hands of Boko haram insurgents, bandits and kidnappers currently terrorising the nation. ACF National Publicity Secretary, Emmanuel Yawe, who spoke with The Guardian, lamented how government has allowed Almajiri schools built by past administration rot away, while the Almajiri syndrome has continued to hunt the north. For instance, Yawe said the school built by the Jonathan government along Zaria-Kano road with billions of naira public funds has been left to rot, without any step taken to address the menace of the almajiris in the society. This is a practical example of political instability how is affecting education development in Nigeria (Abara, Ogunode & Olatunde-Aiyedun, 2022).

Corruption

Corruption is a major problem responsible for high out of school children in Nigeria (Ogunode & Stephen 2021). Corruption has penetrated all institutions in Nigeria including educational institutions. Funds released for the implementation of programmes and policies aimed to reduce out of school children in Nigeria are been misuses and mismanaged and diverted into private pockets. A good example is the national feeding programme with a lot of funds diversion allegation and mismanagement ((Thewhistler, 2020). Ogunode & Abubakar (2021) submitted

that corruption is a major problem facing the implementation of the national feeding programme in Nigeria. The funds released for the implementation of the programme is been looted and mismanaged by some officers handling the implementation across the federation. The former coordinator of the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme in Nigeria noted that government has suspended some officials of the programme in Benue and Niger States because some of them have taken money without the knowledge of government and even opened personal accounts where they had directed that some money for the programme should be lodged into, adding that those that were caught in the act were currently under investigations by the Economic And Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). Another corruption allegation is on the diversion of infrastructural facilities and capacity building programme. The Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC) reported that the sum of N1,016,133.08 billion (N1 billion) misappropriated by six State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) was yet to be returned (Allafrica, 2021). The funds were meant for the provision of human and materials resources that will support the delivery of quality education at the primary schools across the country. UNESCO 2014 reports on Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for All shows that Nigeria is among the 37 countries that are losing money spent on education, because children are not learning. UNESCO disclosed that the menace is already costing governments USD 129 billion a year. It stressed further that despite the money being spent, rejuvenation of primary education is not so soon because of poor-quality education that cannot ensure that children learn (NEEDS, 2014). Transparency International says 66 percent of the money Nigerian governments allocate to education is stolen by corrupt officials. According to the report, corruption is commonplace in education systems across the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Insecurity

Another factor responsible for the problem of out of school children in Nigeria is insecurity especially in the Northern Nigeria. Insecurity in Northern part of Nigeria have led to school closure. Nigerian Tribune, (2021) reported that the inconsistency nature of school calendar in Nigerian educational system is no longer news. It is a common occurrence that one higher institution, secondary school or primary school is closed down due to internal crisis or attacks from bandits. Authorities in North-West, Nigeria had shut down more over 4,000 public primary schools across the state, and over 4,000 public secondary schools were among the closed down schools and over 300, 000 to 400,000 thousand students and pupils are at home after the incidence of Chibok school students' kidnap without considering the effects on the internal administration of the school especially the learners. Also, United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF (2021), said at least one million school children among more than 37 school children in Nigeria are afraid to return to school as schools resume, September. Also, it was observed that the numerous attacks on schools by jihadists and criminal gangs in the north have particularly harmed children's education. These attacks have created a precarious learning environment, discouraged parents and guardians from sending their children to school (Ekpo & Aiyedun, 2019). Since the 2014 Boko Haram abduction of 200 schoolgirls from the northeastern town of Chibok, dozens of schools have been targeted in similar mass abductions. In 2021, around 1,500 students were kidnapped by armed men. While most of the young hostages have since been released for ransom, some still remain in captivity in forests, where armed groups hide out. Mass violence and kidnapping have forced the authorities to close more than 11,000 schools in the country since December 2020 according to (UNICEF, 2022). Ogunode and Kolo (2021) noted that disruption of school administration, learning loss due to school closure, low enrolment, retention and completion rate of Basic school programme, reduction in manpower, disruption in academic calendar of Basic school, killing of students, delay in development or progress of girl's child education and delay in development of Basic education were identified as the effects of insecurity on administration of Basic schools in Northern Nigeria. Ogunode, & Ahaotu, (2021); Ogunode, Ahaotu & Obi-E (2021); and Mohammed & Ogunode (2021) reported the death of students, teachers and school administrators. Musa (2014) observed that many parents are afraid

of sending their children to school because of the insecurity problem in the country. The destruction of schools by insurgents, forced displacement and volatile nature of the region has grossly impacted accessibility to primary education in the area.

High Rate of Poverty

The high rate of poverty among the Nigerians especially the women is another reason for the large out of school children in Nigeria. Many parents cannot afford to send their children to school because of the school fees and other financial commitment (Ogunode, Iyabode & Olatunde-Aiyedun, 2022). World Bank (2022) noted that the number of poor persons in Nigeria will rise to 95.1 million in 2022. The number of poor people was 89.0 million in 2020 and would be 95.1 million in 2022. This would mean that 6.1 million more persons would have fallen beneath the poverty line between 2020 and 2022, a 6.7% increase. With the projected 2022 figures, the number of poor persons in Nigeria has had a four year increase of 14.7% from the 2018/19 figure of 82.1 million to the projected 95.1 million in 2022. The implication of this is that many parents would not be able to send their children to schools rather they will use them for trading and hooking to make money for the family.

High Population Rate

The high fertility rate among Nigerians is another factors responsible for the out of school children. Nigerian. Statista (2021) observed that in Nigeria, people aged up to four years old made up the largest age group: 8.3 percent of males and eight percent of females were less than four years old. Similarly, children aged 5 to 9 years held the second largest share of population. On the other hand, people aged 60 years and older represented a small part of population. Nigeria has one of the youngest population in the world. In whole Africa and in the world, Niger records the lowest median age. Nigeria ranked 18th (Aiyedun, Ogunode & Olatunde-Aiyedun, 2021). Ogunode, Jegede and Ajape (2021) observed that another big problem militating effective implementation primary school education policies is the raising population of children enrolling for the primary school education in Nigeria. To educate this high population required a lot of financial commitment to engage human and materials resources. The population of Nigeria is rising every day and the cost of educating the huge teaming population is high. NOUN (2012) observed that the structure of the Nigeria's population has always shown a large youth base. This is the group that requires education at all levels, and this gives rise to demand in excess of capacity of education. Akpan (undated) stated that the increasing demand for education: has given rise to the demand by parents and their children for educational opportunities. This however, affects educational planning in Nigeria. There is no prospect that the rise in the country's population will ever slow down. Hence effective planning of education becomes difficult. The free and compulsory Universal Basic Education scheme, though aimed at eliminating or reducing illiteracy in the country but it has compounded the problem of increasing demand for education. The scheme provides that all children of school going age should enroll in the basic education programme.

Way Forward

To address the above problems identified as factors responsible for large out of school children in Nigeria, the paper hereby recommended the following:

1. The federal, states and local government should take the issue of educational planning seriously and ensure adequate funds are provided or educational planning in the country
2. The government at every level should increase the funding of education especially the basic education.
3. The government should come up with school expansion plans for all forms of education especially the basic education. More Basic schools should be built across the country.

4. The government should ensure educational policies and programmes designed and formulated to improve on the enrolment of the children to school should be fully implemented.
5. Every new administration that come on board should develop the political will to continue with the inherited policies and programmes.
6. The government should deploy the various anti-corruption agencies in the country to monitor the funds allocated to the ministries of education. This will help to reduce funds diversion.
7. The government should provide security in all aspect of Nigeria by addressing the issues causing insecurities problems in the country.
8. The government should provide social security packages for the poor in rural areas. This will help to increase enrolment in schools.

Conclusion

The high rate of out of school children in Nigeria is a slight to the giant of Africa not just a slight but it's a time bomb that will soon explode into different social vices, especially in the area of terrorism if nothing is done about it soon. There are policies on ground already, to combat this menace eating deep into the the fabrics of our educational system which inturn has posed a major problem in nation building and development. It is therefore up to individuals to be the change we want to see by ensuring that policies put in place by the government are implemented to the later to address the problems and factors responsible for this educational crisis. The government on the other hand should do proper monitoring and evaluation to ensure things are done the way they ought to be. The following identified problems such as ineffective educational planning, poor funding, inadequate educational institutions, poor implementation of policies and programme, political instability, corruption, insecurity, high rate of poverty and high population rate can be solved, if the government can provide adequate funding for basic education, establish more basic schools, plan effectively for education, ensure policies are implemented and sustained, provide adequate security in the country and fight all forms of corruption in the educational administration in Nigeria.

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